

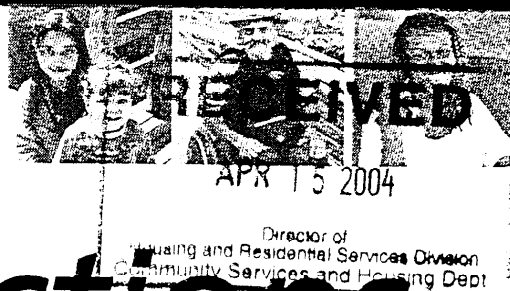


ONPHA

Board Connections

Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association | www.onpha.on.ca

APRIL 2004



Benchmarks Revisited

With no official word yet from the Ministry, it now looks like the release date of the draft benchmarks will be in late spring, followed by a review period before they are finalized.

ONPHA will soon be surveying our members to collect your actual cost and revenue numbers in preparation for the benchmarks.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that providers set up a meeting with your Service Manager as soon as possible to discuss in advance how the information will be released and how they intend to consult, in order to ensure a smooth and meaningful process.

Social Housing Reform Act Regulation Changes

The Ministry is trying to "fast track" some changes to the regulations. We have been told that one would allow the Service Manager to rescind a notice of loss of eligibility after a resident fails to meet the 10-day rule, saving significant administrative time. A second change would require certification in writing-- not merely an oral statement-- by a qualified expert certifying that a household member is a victim of abuse, creating a more verifiable paper trail. Four minor housekeeping changes are also under consideration, but more contentious changes will have to wait.

Province to Replace Tenant Protection Act

The Province is advancing quickly on its pledge to replace the current *Tenant Protection Act* (TPA), something that will affect the interests of non-profit housing providers. The government is currently drafting a discussion paper on a variety of landlord/tenant issues prior to introducing its new legislation.

ONPHA has already begun working with our members to ensure we have input into the government's discussion paper, due to be released sometime in April.

We quickly held a mini consultation of members representing a mix of provider types as well as TPA experts. From this we developed a paper outlining the key issues from the non-profit provider perspective, which we submitted to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing John Gerretsen on March 24, asking for inclusion in the government's discussion paper.

So far, ONPHA members have identified a number of issues with the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, confusion/overlap between the TPA and the SHRA, the eviction process and the role of non-profit housing, and more.

ONPHA has made it clear that with non-profit housing providers accounting for over 10% of the residential tenancies in Ontario-- including many of the most challenging ones-- the government needs to give careful consideration to the perspective of ONPHA members.

Once the Ministry's discussion paper is released, ONPHA plans on using part of our upcoming Regional Meetings (tentatively scheduled for May and June) to solicit further member input into the new legislation, to feed into the Ministry's consultation process.

ONPHA Releases Provincial Waiting List Stats

ONPHA has just released the results of a unique province-wide survey showing 158,456 households are currently waiting for social housing across Ontario.

Ontario has not had a province-wide waiting list statistic since social housing was downloaded to the 47 municipal service managers.

ONPHA's survey found the longest waiting lists in Toronto, Peel, and Ottawa, followed by Durham, Waterloo, York, Hamilton and London. Province-wide, almost half (46.5%) of households on the waiting list are families, 20.5% are seniors and 33% are non-senior single. The vast majority of households (76%) on the list earn below \$20,000 per year.

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News in Brief

ONPHA Meets with Minister David Caplan

On February 16, ONPHA met with Public Infrastructure Renewal Minister David Caplan, his Assistant Deputy Minister Doug Barnes and Andy Stein, his housing policy advisor in a very useful and informative meeting. The Minister did not like the idea of 'sector share' i.e. setting aside 50% of the new affordable development allocation to non-profit providers (or anyone else for that matter), so ONPHA made a counter-recommendation. We argued for financial and development support/expertise for non-profit providers to maximize our sector's productivity. We also argued for targeted rent supplements, not shallow portable shelter allowances. Minister Caplan clearly understands our issues.

Spring Budget will be Key

We anxiously await the spring provincial budget for delivery of the Liberals' housing commitments. ONPHA's **supportive housing** providers desperately need operating funding immediately. ONPHA is asking our members to lobby your provincial representatives now, using our "Pre-Budget Housing Issues" lobby leave behind available from our website www.onpha.on.ca.

Housing Summit: Public Meeting a Refreshing Change

David Crombie, co-chair of the Affordable Housing Coalition, chaired an extraordinary housing summit on Feb 26 hosted by Toronto Mayor David Miller and attended by over 500 housing representatives, including ONPHA, the federal and provincial housing ministers and MCSS. ONPHA Committee Chair Brigitte Witkowski delivered a brilliant attack on NIMBYism. The provincial ministers re-announced earlier commitments, included 2,300 new units and the rent supplement program, which will now also allow portable shelter allowances and be block-funded to the Service Manager.

Hydro Relief for Poor, Rent Bank Announcement

Just prior to the April 1 energy price hike, the Province announced a \$2 million energy emergency fund to provide one-time assistance to tenants with limited income who fall behind on their energy bills. The announcement of a \$10 million Provincial Rent Bank Program (delivered through the Service Managers) to help tenants with short-term arrears stay in their homes was also announced.

Federal News

There was no new funding for housing or for the cities agenda (other than the GST) in the March 23 Federal Budget. A month earlier Paul Martin had told a group of Quebec housing activists that the Liberal election platform would contain a written 5-year commitment with sums increasing every year for "social housing," saying that "affordable housing" meant nothing and was often too expensive. As yet, a spring election remains uncertain. ONPHA is preparing a Federal Election Kit that will be instantly available once the election is called.

ONPHA Seeking Hydro Rate Initiatives for Northern Members

ONPHA recently contacted the Deputy Ministers of both the Ministries of Northern Development and Mines and Energy about any initiatives they may be pursuing to ease the disproportionately high hydro rate burden for the 20% of ONPHA members in Northern Ontario. We have not as yet heard back but will keep you posted.

SHSCFI Investment Waiver Gone

In response to concerns raised by providers, SHSCFI has decided to end the requirement that non-profits wishing to invest in the social housing long-term bond or equity fund without a capital plan must sign a waiver.

Building the Potential for Private/Non-Profit Relationships

Recently, ONPHA participated in a working group that included the Fair Rental Policy Organization, Greater Toronto Homebuilders Association and CHF, sponsored by the SHSC, to explore whether our sectors could agree on an affordable housing program that we could jointly recommend to government. All participants concluded that there was common ground and potential, but ONPHA wants to ensure that non-profit principles are not compromised. This is one of the areas that ONPHA's New Supply Committee is looking at, as well as making recommendations to improve the housing aspects of the Provincial Policy Statement.

100% GST Rebates

If your non-profit already has GST municipal status, you will now be eligible for a 100% GST rebate.

Sign up for investment training

Make the most of your capital reserve investments with targeted training on capital reserve planning, managing cash flow, and investing. Courses run by ONPHA for SHSCFI in your area during May and June. Expert instructors, great handouts. Register now at www.onpha.on.ca.



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